

WHOOPI GOLDBERG has mixed feelings about the huge success of her latest movie, *Sister Act*.

"Disney were not the greatest people to work for," the outspoken actress tells TV WEEK in an exclusive interview. "But since then they've apologised publicly several times. So, given the shift, it should be a better experience this time... or maybe not. Ask me this time next year and I'll tell you!"

Whoopi is referring to the recently-announced sequel to *Sister Act*, the original movie being the surprise hit of the year, when with little publicity, the \$21 million project grossed more than \$100 million in the U.S.

While Whoopi was working on the *Sister Act*, starring as a lounge singer who dresses up as a nun and hides from the Mob in a convent, she was at odds with the studio constantly and at a special tribute dinner for friend Richard Pryor, a video she recorded started with: "I'm sorry I can't be there... I'm picking cotton for Disney these days!"

Despite Whoopi's duel with the studio during that movie, in the true tradition of Hollywood, everyone buried the hatchet to collaborate on a sequel, due to start shooting early next year.

Thanks to the success of *Sister Act*, the Oscar-winning actress has found herself one of the most powerful in Hollywood, although she calls a columnist's claim that she will be paid \$7 million for the sequel "totally untrue".

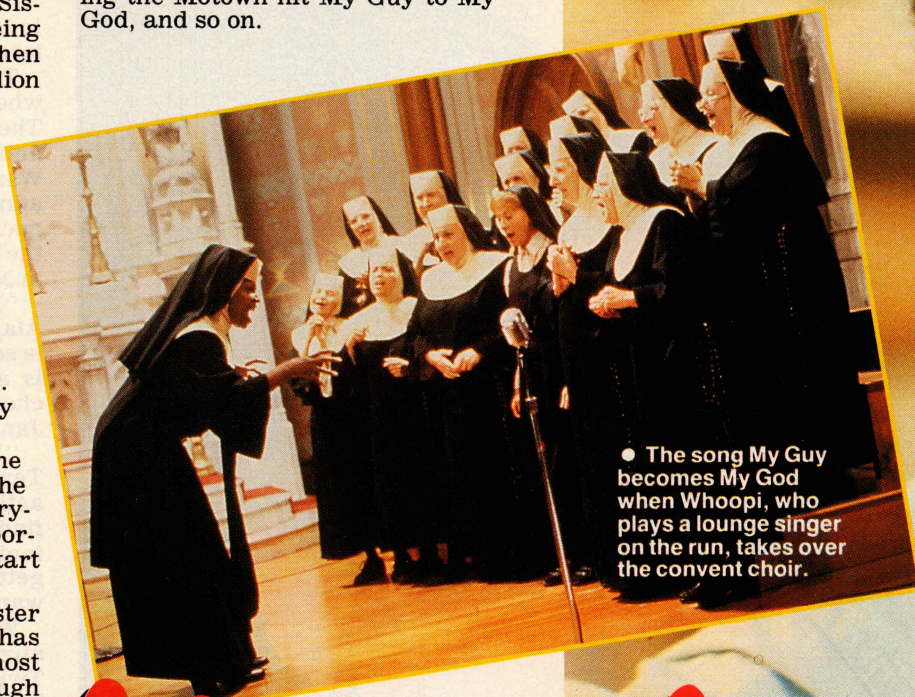
"Disney just don't pay that kind of money to women, but I think the story will help change that failure factor that goes along with my name. Instead of 'Whoopi Goldberg — string of failures', I'll be considered successful at last."

"I've proved in my career that I've drawn people in to three movies that have made over \$100 million (*The Color Purple*, *Ghost* and *Sister Act*), and that's pretty good in an 11-film span, when some people have never done it in 100 movies."

In *Sister Act*, Whoopi plays second-rate lounge singer Deloris Van Cartier, who witnesses a mur-

der at the hands of her mobster boyfriend Vince LaRocca (Harvey Keitel). Thanks to the witness protection program, Deloris goes underground and ends up cloistered in the last place on earth anyone would think to look for her — a convent of devout nuns!

Initially resisting the chaste life of a convent, Deloris encourages the naive nuns to experience the outside world and winds up coaching the convent choir and adapting her lounge act to the church, changing the Motown hit *My Guy* to *My God*, and so on.



● The song *My Guy* becomes *My God* when Whoopi, who plays a lounge singer on the run, takes over the convent choir.

Whooping

"It's just a feel-good kind of movie," Whoopi says.

"This woman actually realises there is something she can teach somebody and she doesn't have to just be a taker. She gives the nuns the power to be more than they are and in the process she finds herself, thanks to these crazy women dressed in black."

Whoopi was taught at school by nuns and remembers them as "very isolated". She adds: "I liked

them a lot, but I really like modern nuns better because at least they have an idea of what you're about and that you're a human being."

Whoopi says she's received lots of fan mail from real nuns who loved the film — and Disney has received numerous requests from church choirs for the musical arrangements of the songs!

"A lot of nuns like the idea of the fluffiness of the piece, but they are not all that thrilled with the representation because it sends them

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● Whoopi
Goldberg in her
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it up!

back 10 or 15 years. Those types of nuns don't exist any more. The real nuns today are out there fighting for their rights and their survival and talking about abortion and whether women should be ordained as priests and Disney didn't want to go anywhere near that."

The 43-year-old actress has never been afraid to speak her mind. A fierce campaigner for abortion rights and a founder (with close friend Robin Williams) of the Comic Relief Fund for the homeless, Whoopi is also self-deprecating about the constant media attention to her color.

"I'm actually in a much better

position being black, because you can't tell how old I am," she says with a chuckle.

"White people don't wake up in the morning and say 'Ugh, I'm white!' and I don't wake up and say 'Ugh, I'm black!' I just don't think about it because I know I'm always going to be black and it will never change — I could change my sex, but what a drag!

"So when people ask me about roles for black women, I just don't deal with it.

"I just go in to the meeting, say 'Yes I can do the part' and let them sweat."

*From Jenny Cooney
in Los Angeles*

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